

CLARISSA LUARD AWARD

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Winner of independent publishing award announced

Perseverance, courage and innovation triumphed this evening as the **Clarissa Luard Award for Independent Publishers** was awarded to:

Peepal Tree Press

Peepal Tree Press had been shortlisted along with three other independent publishers: Lantana Publishing, Little Toller Books and Penned in the Margins. The award received many inspiring submissions, which showcase the innovation and quality of independent publishing today. The judges were particularly impressed by Peepal Tree Press' tenacity in a challenging market, and by its innovative proposal for the £10,000 prize money.

Peepal Tree Press was founded in Leeds in 1985 to publish the best of international writing from the Caribbean, its diasporas and the UK, as well as Black British fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Its proposed plan will have immediate impact, demanding attention from the industry and readers at large, as well as creating an enduring legacy of a unique showcase for Caribbean and Black British writing.

The project is to inaugurate a fortnightly radio-style programme, delivered as a podcast, entitled The New Caribbean Voices, in honour of the BBC radio programme, Caribbean Voices, which aired between 1945 and 1958, and reached a size and diversity of audience that has not been achieved since.

The Clarissa Luard Award was founded in 2005 by Arts Council England, in memory of a much-loved literature officer. New Writing North manages the biennial award, which is applied for by open submission.

The award was judged by the writer **Jenn Ashworth**, arts professional **Gary McKeone**, literary editor and publisher **Sharmaine Lovegrove**, and bookseller **Helen Stanton**. They all agree: independent publishing showed itself to be in magnificent form.

For all media enquiries, please contact: Nikki Barrow, Mander Barrow PR Ltd Email: nikki@manderbarrowpr.com Tel: 07813 806297

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Gary McKeone, programme director of St George's House and former literature director at Arts Council England, said:

"It is testimony to the quality of independent publishers on these islands that we arrived at such a strong shortlist and such a deserving winner. Peepal Tree Press has been a stand-out feature of the literary landscape of this country for over forty years. Many of those years have been a struggle; the need to adapt to a changing ecology has been ever present. But Peepal Tree survives and flourishes, bringing terrific literature to as wide an audience as it can possibly reach. Quality, perseverance and innovation are the watch words. This award will enable Peepal Tree to use new channels to expand the readership for Caribbean and Black British writing. Clarissa would have been delighted."

Jenn Ashworth, author of *The Friday Gospels*, said:

"It was an incredible privilege to examine all the entries from independent publishers around the country. The presses showcased innovative work in an exciting range of forms and genres and provided proof, if any were needed, that the industry is alive and kicking. From an incredibly varied and vibrant shortlist which showcased the energy, imagination and commitment to diversity and innovation in the sector, we selected Peepal Tree who have proposed an exciting project the judging panel felt certain would have an enduringly positive and culturally significant impact on our literary culture."

Sharmaine Lovegrove, literary editor at *Elle* and publisher of Dialogue Books at Little, Brown Book Group, said:

"This award highlights the importance of independent publishing in our society and shines a light on its brilliance and dynamism across the country. The winners Peepal Tree Press are courageous and original in their publishing, bold in their future ambitions and truly deserve this award."

The winner was announced alongside the David Cohen Prize for Literature at a ceremony at BAFTA in London.

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Notes to editor

New Writing North is the literature development agency for the North of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Northern Writers' Awards, Cuckoo Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

www.newwritingnorth.com

Judges' biographies:

Jenn Ashworth was born in 1982 in Preston. She studied English at Cambridge and since then has gained an MA from Manchester University, trained as a librarian and run a prison library in Lancashire. She now lectures in Creative Writing at the University of Lancaster. Her first novel, *A Kind of Intimacy*, was published in 2009 and won a Betty Trask Award. In 2011 her second, *Cold Light*, was published by Sceptre and she was chosen by BBC's The Culture Show as one of the twelve Best New British Novelists. In 2013 her third novel, *The Friday Gospels*, was published to resounding critical acclaim and *Fell* was published in 2016. She lives in Lancaster with her husband, son and daughter.

Sharmaine Lovegrove is a Publisher, Film and Television Scout and Literary Editor. She is co-founder and director of Dialogue Scouting, the UK's first book to film & TV scouting agency as well as being *ELLE's* Literary Editor. In May 2017, Little, Brown Book Group launched a new stand-alone imprint dedicated to inclusivity called Dialogue Books. The new imprint is spearheaded by Sharmaine as publisher. Prior to setting up Dialogue Scouting she set up her own bookshop & creative consultancy in Berlin and has worked in PR, bookselling, event management and digital consultancy.

Gary McKeone is currently Programme Director at St George's House, Windsor Castle. A former Literature Director at Arts Council England, he worked closely with Clarissa Luard. Gary has also worked in theatre with Field Day Theatre Company in Ireland and at the Royal Festival Hall where he worked on the literature programme with poet Maura Dooley. He has previously written for radio and stage and has published a number of pieces in the *Guardian* and *Independent* newspapers.

Helen Stanton has spent most of her working life in the book trade. She worked for Waterstones for many years, before working in publishing at Headline, Canongate, Birlinn and Polygon. In 2011 Helen took over the independent bookshop, Forum Books, in Corbridge, and opened a second shop, Forum Books Kids, in 2014.

... 4/ About Peepal Tree Press and the three shortlisted publishers:

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Peepal Tree Press was founded in Leeds in 1985. Part of the founding ethos was a commitment to literary excellence and anti-racism, social justice and equality, with a goal to extend the appreciation of cultural diversity as an essential element of national life.

Recently published titles include:

Wife by Tiphonie Yanique

Kingdom of Gravity by Nick Makoha

The Repenters by Kevin Hosein

www.peepaltreepress.com

Lantana Publishing was set up in London in 2014. A young, female-led outfit, Lantana Publishing produces diverse and inclusive award-winning picture books for children. Their mission is to select outstanding writing from around the world, working with prize-winning authors and illustrators from many countries, while at the same time nurturing new writing talent from neglected communities. Their commitment is to achieve a more diverse and inclusive children's book landscape for the next generation of young readers.

Recently published titles include:

Chicken in the Kitchen by Nnedi Okrafor & Merhdokht Amini

Dragon Dancer by Joyce Chng and J r my Pailler

The Jasmine Sneeze by Nadine Kaadan

www.lantanapublishing.com

Little Toller Books was set up in Dorset in 2008 as an imprint of the Dovecote Press, a family-run publishing company that specialised in books about rural life and local history since 1974. Little Toller was started to revive forgotten and classic books about nature and rural life in the British Isles. The success of their Nature Classics enabled it to grow into an independent publisher in its own right: it specialises in new books on similar subjects by writers and artists who seek inventive ways to reconnect readers with the natural world and to celebrate the places we live in.

Recently published titles include:

Snow by Marcus Sedgwick

Orison for a Curlew by Horatio Clare

On the Marshes by Carol Donaldson

www.littletoller.co.uk

Penned in the Margins was set up in London in 2004. A literary arts company, it produces new work live, in print and online. They blend publishing and production and publish across poetry, experimental fiction and literary non-fiction.

Recently published titles include:

Cain by Luke Kennard

Sunshine by Melissa Lee-Houghton

The Shipwrecked House by Claire Trevien

Midland by Honor Gavin

www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk

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